

# **SOUTH CAROLINA**

---

## ELECTION COMMISSION

### **AUDITING ABSENTEE VOTING PROCESSES IN SOUTH CAROLINA**

---

**A CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER PROJECT**

**ELIZA CAUGHMAN SPENCE, PROGRAM COORDINATOR II**  
**FEBRUARY 2017**

## Table of Contents

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2 THE SEC’S ROLE IN ELECTIONS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3 THE PROJECT .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.4 SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. GAP ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.1 CURRENT STATE .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.2 DESIRED STATE .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.3 PROPOSED SOLUTION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. DEVELOPING THE PROJECT PLAN .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4. FUTURE APPLICATION .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5. APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5.1 APPENDIX A – COUER BUSINESS GROUP AUDIT MODEL.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5.2 APPENDIX B – ABSENTEE BALLOTS AUDITED CHART .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5.3 APPENDIX C – S.C. APPLICATION FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>5.4 APPENDIX D – REQUEST FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION BY AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>5.5 APPENDIX E – AUTHORIZATION TO RETURN ABSENTEE BALLOT .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>5.5 APPENDIX F – POST AUDIT SURVEY .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>6. WORKS CITED .....</b>	<b>27</b>

# **1. Executive Summary**

## **1.1 Introduction**

In South Carolina, a voter registered in the state can vote up to thirty days prior to the day before an election if voting absentee for any of the following eighteen reasons<sup>1</sup>:

1. Member of the Uniformed Services on Active Duty
2. Member of the Merchant Marine
3. Spouse or dependent of a member of the Uniformed Services or Merchant Marine
4. U.S. Citizen temporarily residing outside of the United States due to employment, serving with the American Red Cross, USO, Peace Corps, etc.
5. U.S. Citizen permanently residing outside of the United States
6. Physical Disability
7. Student, their spouse or dependents residing with them who are outside their county of residence
8. For reasons of employment will not be able to vote on Election Day
9. Government employee, their spouse or dependents residing with them who are outside their county of residence on Election Day
10. Person on vacation who will be outside their county of residence on Election Day
11. Serving as a juror in a state or federal court on Election Day

12. Admitted to the hospital as emergency patient on the day of the election or within a four-day period before the election
13. Death or funeral in the family within a three-day period before the election
14. Confined to jail or pre-trial facility pending disposition or arrest or trial
15. Attending a sick or physically disabled person on Election Day
16. Certified poll watcher, poll manager, county registration board or election commission member or staff working on Election Day
17. Persons sixty-five years of age or older
18. For religious reasons, a voter who does not wish to vote on Saturday (*valid for a Presidential Preference Primary only*)

In the State of South Carolina alone, there are over three million registered voters and forty-six (46) county offices. For the voters who qualify to vote by absentee ballot, the ability to do so is a necessity, not simply a convenience. Therefore, it is imperative that the county staff who are processing the absentee applications and ballots are doing so in a transparent, timely and law-abiding way. An election without trust in the various election processes only leads to disruption and chaos within a civilized society.

## **1.2 The SEC's Role in Elections**

On June 2, 2014, Governor Nikki Haley signed into law South Carolina Senate Bill 815 (S815).<sup>2</sup> This bill gave the State Election Commission (SEC) the right to oversee and audit the policies and procedures of each of the forty-six county voter registration and elections offices (county offices). In August 2014, the SEC hired a group of external consultants, Couer Business Group, to develop a comprehensive post-election audit

plan. This group provided the SEC with the audit plan in December 2014, and the plan was accepted by the SEC in February 2015.

The SEC's mission is to ensure every eligible citizen has the opportunity to register to vote, to participate in fair and impartial elections, and to have the assurance that their votes will count. As a direct result of S815 being signed into law, the SEC has been charged with auditing specific areas of elections that directly affect South Carolina citizens and the affirmation that every vote counts. This is true not only with voting at the polls on Election Day, but also when voting absentee by mail. Absentee voting is a vital area of the audit plan; therefore a specific guideline to accomplish the task is necessary.

**Supervisory Responsibilities as quoted from South Carolina S.815, Act 196:<sup>2</sup>**

- Supervise the conduct of county board of elections and voter registration, as established pursuant to Article 1, Chapter 5, which administer elections and voter registration in the State and ensure those boards' compliance with the requirements with applicable state or federal law or State Election Commission policies and procedures with regard to the conduct of elections or the voter registration process by all persons involved in the elections process
- Conduct reviews, audits, or other postelection analysis of county board of elections and voter registration, as established pursuant to Article 1, Chapter 5, to ensure those boards' compliance with the requirements with applicable state or federal law or State Election Commission policies and procedures with regard to the conduct of elections or the voter registration process by all persons involved in the elections process
- Maintain a complete master file of all qualified electors by county and by precincts

- In the event that the State Election Commission, acting through its Executive Director, determines that a county board of elections and voter registration has failed to comply with applicable state or federal law or State Election Commission policies and procedures with regard to the conduct of the election or voter registration process, the State Election Commission, acting through its Executive Director or other designee, must supervise, pursuant to Section 7-3-20(C)(1), the county board to the extent necessary to:
  - 1) Identify the failure to comply with state or federal law or State Election Commission policies and procedures;
  - 2) Establish a plan to correct the failure; and
  - 3) Implement the plan to correct the failure. The officials and employees of the State Election Commission and the county board must work together, in good faith, to remedy the failure of the county board to adhere to state or federal law. In the event of a difference of policy or opinion between a county election official or employee and the State Election Commission or its designee, pertaining to the manner in which particular functions must be performed, the policy or opinion of the State Election Commission shall control.
- If the State Election Commission determines that an official or an employee of a county board of voter registration and elections has negligently failed to comply with applicable state or federal law or State Election Commission policies and procedures with regard to the election or voter registration process or fails to comply with or cooperate with the corrective plan established by the State Election Commission or its designee under the provisions of subsection (A), the Commission may order the decertification of that official or employee and if decertified the Commission shall require that official to participate in a retraining program approved by the Commission prior to recertification. If the Commission finds that the failure to comply with state or federal law or State Election Commission policies and procedures by an official is willful, it shall recommend the termination of that official to the Governor or it shall recommend

termination of a staff member to the director of the appropriate county board of voter registration and elections.

## **1.3 The Project**

The SEC recognizes that auditing the absentee processes of each county is only part of the overall audit model provided by the Couer Business Group (see Appendix A). The SEC must work with county offices throughout the election cycle to support the implementation and use of accurate processes. This Certified Public Manager (CPM) project is a process improvement project for auditing the 46 counties in the state, focusing on the specific audit area of absentee application and voting processes and procedures.

In researching this specific area of the overall audit, the audits of seven different counties' absentee processes in South Carolina were performed. These counties were:

1. Fairfield County
2. Chester County
3. Calhoun County
4. Lexington County
5. Aiken County
6. Edgefield County
7. McCormick County

During these seven audits, data was collected specific to each county's absentee processes (see Appendix B). Through this research, the data collection tools identified to be the most accurate included the following:

- SEC Voter Registration and Election Management System (VREMS)

This is the system by which voter registration records are created and stored, and where the electronic records, for elections in our state and voter participation specifics for those elections, are created and managed.

It is important to note this management system is not to be confused with the election database management system: the offline system where the election databases are created and votes are tallied. For security purposes the two management systems are completely separate, thus ensuring the integrity of the vote. The audit process found herein is only concerned with the use of records gathered from VREMS.

- Absentee specific election documentation

This is information that should be readily available and stored at the county offices for elections which have not yet been archived. (Election materials for each separate election are stored at the county offices for a period of no less than two (2) years. After that interim, they are scanned in and stored at the SC Archives and History building. The process of storing election records is per South Carolina Voter Registration and Election law 7-15-385.<sup>1)</sup>)

## **1.4 Summary**

The implementation of auditing counties' various processes is a tremendous project. Therefore, it requires a breakdown into specific areas of audit where auditable data is readily available. The initial startup of these audit processes includes coordination and cooperation from county offices. This involves developing a positive rapport with the



county offices' staff (making access to the needed materials easier) and the recommendations of necessary training (in areas of weakness) more palatable. Through training of best practices and election laws, the SEC has always maintained some oversight into each county's processes. However, it has not been able to hold the county's staff (specific to, but not solely, the director) accountable for any major errors in the county's processes. With the signing of Bill S815, the SEC has now been given the authority to oversee the implementations of these processes and to establish the specific methods of auditing each area.

Research of each county's documentation, review of the state's most current voter registration and election laws, collection of statistical absentee voting records for the county from VREMS, and cross-referencing of those records with the county's absentee documentation for the election selected, allows the SEC to audit a county's best practices where absentee is concerned.

## **2. Gap Analysis**

### **2.1 Current State**

Although the laws regarding absentee voting in South Carolina are clear, county offices across the state are inconsistent in their in-office absentee voting policies and procedures. These inconsistencies lead to voter confusion and, in many instances, a perceived lack of transparency in elections. This, in turn, leads to an overall distrust of the election process by the citizens of South Carolina.

## **2.2 Desired State**

In an effort to promote transparency and overcome distrust in the election process, it is necessary absentee voting policies and procedures be consistent throughout the state. Creating a standard set of compliance audit guidelines for the audit team, and targeting training on absentee processes and proper documentation will likely eliminate many of the repetitive errors that occur in absentee voting. This will provide more overall transparency in elections.

### **Key factors in the desired state:**

- Verify the knowledge and compliance with state and federal laws for absentee voting by any county staff involved in the process
- Ensure compliance with SEC policies and procedures for standards of excellence in absentee processing
- Identify various positive county processes
- Develop positive rapport with each county office
- Develop a *specific* guideline for auditing absentee processes and procedures, so every SEC auditor can be in lock-step with their team members
- Audit counties randomly, then follow through by providing each with positive feedback including recommendations for any needed corrections
- Through training, eliminate local practices that are not in compliance with state and federal laws, and state policies and procedures
- Increase accountability of county staff through the audit process
- Promote transparency in the absentee voting election process

In the SEC Voter Registration and Election Management System (VREMS), several reports that are county, election and absentee specific have come to light through this research. These absentee materials can be used in cross-checking information and the data gathered from the counties.

## **2.3 Proposed Solution**

A close look into the audit process guide as set forth by the Couer Business Group (see Appendix A), reveals overall general suggestions for the audit. However, in many instances, these suggestions for areas of audit and the steps to completion include items that are either not auditable (due to a lack of access to tangible data necessary to audit that area properly); or the suggested step is not an area that our counties deal with during an election cycle.

The Couer Business Group did *not* provide the SEC a step by step guide or process for completing each area to be audited during the engagement with the county. In developing a process improvement, Absentee Voting was the area of engagement selected. Absentee voting is an area of the voting process in which the public evidences the most distrust. It is also the area in which the SEC must deal with the most protests, appeals, litigations and investigations. Many voters question the overall absentee process.

Several myths surround the voting process, especially where absentee is concerned. A couple of these myths are: "Absentee ballots only count in close elections;" "Absentee ballots are not secret."<sup>3</sup> These myths are exactly that...myths. Absentee voting is the least understood and the most in need of elucidation. In an effort to use

the audit plan as a tool in implementing change and creating greater transparency, I have developed a step by step guide for auditing the counties in the sphere of absentee processes.

### **3. Developing the Project Plan**

#### **Step 1 – Selection of Election to be Audited**

The first step to auditing absentee processes is to decide which election should be audited. In choosing an election, one must take into account the size of the election so that the audit pool is large enough to give a good representation of the absentee processes within the county. Taking this into account, the election selected should be the most recent large election (i.e. the Statewide General Election, a Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) or a Presidential Election).

#### **Step 2 – Verifying Number of Absentee Voters in the Selected Election**

Each election is assigned an election number sequentially via VREMS when the election is created. For General Elections, PPPs and Presidential Elections - as well as any run-offs associated with these elections - an election is created in VREMS by the SEC. All voter participation is then tracked in this system as well.

Once the election is held and has been certified, the number of voters who voted absentee can be found in VREMS. The record for these voters can be broken down by county, election number and party (PPP only). It can then be sorted by voter registration number or alphabetically by name. (It is important to point out that by the time an auditor begins to pull these numbers they should have had ample training in

navigating VREMS.) Once this report for the election chosen to be audited is downloaded, a total number of voters who requested an absentee ballot can be narrowed down even further.

In order to ensure that a true overall picture is given of a county's absentee process, an executive decision was made that a random audit pool of twenty to forty percent (20% – 40%) of the total absentee ballots requested *and* how these absentee ballots were returned should be used.

### **Step 3 – Review of the Audit Pool Document**

Once step two is completed, the audit pool document, downloaded and sorted from VREMS, can then be reviewed. A number of items can be audited by simply reviewing this document. This report shows:

- Date the “State of South Carolina Application for Absentee Ballot” (see Appendix C) was requested
- How (by what method) the application to vote absentee was requested
- Who requested the application to vote absentee (A request for an *application* to vote absentee can be made by the voter, a voter's documented representative (i.e. Power of Attorney or one indicated by the voter through the use of the “Request for Absentee Ballot Application by Authorized Representative”, SEC Form 1055 (see Appendix D)), or an immediate family member of the voter.<sup>1)</sup>)
- Date the application was received in the county office
- Date the absentee ballot was mailed out to the voter
- Date the absentee ballot was received from the voter in the county office
- How the ballot was received from the voter in the county office

## Auditing Absentee Voting Processes in South Carolina

- Who returned the ballot to the county office (If returned “in person”, an absentee ballot can be returned by the voter or an authorized representative appointed by the voter, in which an “Authorization to Return Absentee Ballot”, SEC Form 1050 (see Appendix E) (included in the ballot packet mailed to the voter) must be completed and signed by the voter and accompany the returned sealed ballot.<sup>1)</sup>)

From this information there are several areas that need to be audited:

1. Timeliness of the county staff in sending out the application to request an absentee ballot to the voter once he or she has requested it.
2. Timeliness of the county staff in sending out an absentee ballot once the completed application to request an absentee ballot has been received from the voter.
3. If the report indicates the ballot was returned by someone other than the voter, SEC auditors know to look for an authorized representative form to be on file at the county office.

### **Step 4 – Timeliness of Mailing the Requested “Request to Vote Absentee” Form**

Absentee Ballots can only be requested by the general public through the use of an Absentee Ballot Request form. The request for this form can be made in various ways:

- By mail via the United States Postal Service
- By telephone
- By email
- By fax
- In person

- Via the internet using the links found online at [www.scvotes.org](http://www.scvotes.org).

Once the properly completed and signed application ("Request to Vote Absentee" form) is received in the county office, it is to be mailed out to the voter within two (2) business days per guidelines set forth by the SEC.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Step 5 – Timeliness of Mailing the Absentee Ballot**

"A request for an application to vote by absentee ballot may be made anytime during the calendar year in which the election in which the qualified elector desires to be permitted to vote by absentee ballot is being held."<sup>1</sup>

When a properly completed and signed request for an absentee ballot has been received in the county office, the mailing of the absentee ballot should be done in a timely manner once absentee voting has begun in South Carolina. Absentee voting precincts are opened in South Carolina thirty (30) days prior to the day before the election in every county. The ballot is to be mailed no later than two (2) business days after receipt of the request or as soon as the election's absentee materials are available per suggested guidelines given by the SEC.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Step 6 – Cross Reference of Absentee Documents**

The next step in this audit process is to take the report downloaded and sorted from VREMS and cross check the information found from it with the absentee hard copy documents found at each county or county storage site. These hard copies include:

- Application for Absentee Ballot from voter
- Request for Absentee Ballot Application by Authorized Representative
- Ballot Outer Envelope

- Authorization to Return Absentee Ballot

From these documents, several items can be audited by cross referencing the information with the report from VREMS. Information for review and cross reference are:

1. Verification of date stamps – Time and date stamps are used in county offices. When a document is received in the county office, the date stamp indicated on the hard copy should be identical to the date entered into VREMS by the county staff.
2. Verification of receipt of and the proper completion of the Request for Absentee Ballot Application by Authorized Representative form - When someone other than the voter or an immediate family member of the voter is indicated on the report, the presence and retention of this form is required.
3. Verification of receipt of and the proper completion of the Authorization to Return Absentee Ballot – When anyone other than the voter returns a voter's ballot (in the sealed ballot envelope – inner ballot envelope sealed and placed into the outer envelope which is then sealed) to the county office, the presence and retention of this form is required.
4. Verification of proper completion, signing and witnessing of the Voter's Oath – When a voter submits his or her ballot, the sealed outer envelope contains a voter's oath area. In this area the voter's oath must be completed properly by the voter; signing where indicated and having their signature witnessed.<sup>1</sup>



**Step 7 – Back Up Documentation**

If any errors are found while cross referencing the hard copies, a copy showing the error is made. This copy is then kept with the audit file and provided to the county in case of any differences the county may have in the initial findings report and as evidence provided in the final audit report issued.

**Step 8 – Tally of Errors Found**

All errors found in each area of the audit are noted throughout the audit and tallied, per section, for documentation purposes.

**Step 9 – Absentee Audit Initial Findings**

A letter of the initial findings of the audit of a county's absentee process, including suggestions on ways in which the errors found can be remedied (i.e. training provided by the audit team/area representatives or the SEC training team as coordinated by the county director, review of processes by the county director with his or her staff, review of procedural guidelines provided by the SEC, etc) is mailed and electronically sent to the county's director as soon as possible upon the conclusion of the absentee audit. The letter allows a period of two (2) weeks from the director's receipt of this letter in which the county director can respond to the initial findings. The county director is instructed in this letter to respond in agreement or disagreement of the initial findings. The county's response should be signed by the director and the chairperson of the county's board of elections. If there are any discrepancies in the findings noted by the county director or the board, a review of the findings will be necessary. All back up documentation must then be provided to the county director and/or county board.

### **Step 10 – Absentee Final Audit Letter**

A final audit letter is issued upon the acceptance of the initial findings by the county director and the chairperson of the county's board. This final absentee audit letter is sent to the county director and the county's board of elections and is then posted on ElectionNet: the intra-communication website for all of the South Carolina county election offices and the SEC.

### **Step 11 – Survey of Audit Effectiveness**

After the final audit letter has been sent, a survey of the process should be administered to the audited county's staff (see Appendix F). This survey will allow the SEC to measure the effectiveness of the audit. From this survey the SEC will be able to monitor the reaction to the audit by the county office, see which areas of the audit might be in need of improvement, determine the success or failure of the absentee audit process and measure any specific steps that are overly burdensome on the county staff or are not accomplishing the outcome desired by the audit.

### **Result – Auditing Absentee Voting Processes**

The result of the effort is a specific guide for auditing the absentee voting process, not provided by the Couer Business Group, which can be used immediately by the SEC's newly established audit/area representative team. This audit will not only identify any training needs (by providing an objective overview of strengths and weaknesses among a county's overall staff), but will help to develop a positive rapport with the counties and provide transparency to the absentee voting process. The development of a greater relationship with the county election staff will be accomplished by getting together "in the trenches"; thus bridging the divide often found between county and

state offices. By being willing to point out not only their strengths to them, but also to provide them with answers to their needs when any weaknesses are uncovered, our election personnel, both county and state, can truly begin working together as a team.

## **4. Future Application**

This step by step guide for auditing the absentee voting processes in our state is a vast improvement from the simplified directives provided to the SEC by the Couer Business Group. The model provided to the SEC by the group was generalized and lacked the ability to actually guide a person through specific steps to correctly and efficiently audit the county absentee processes in an election.

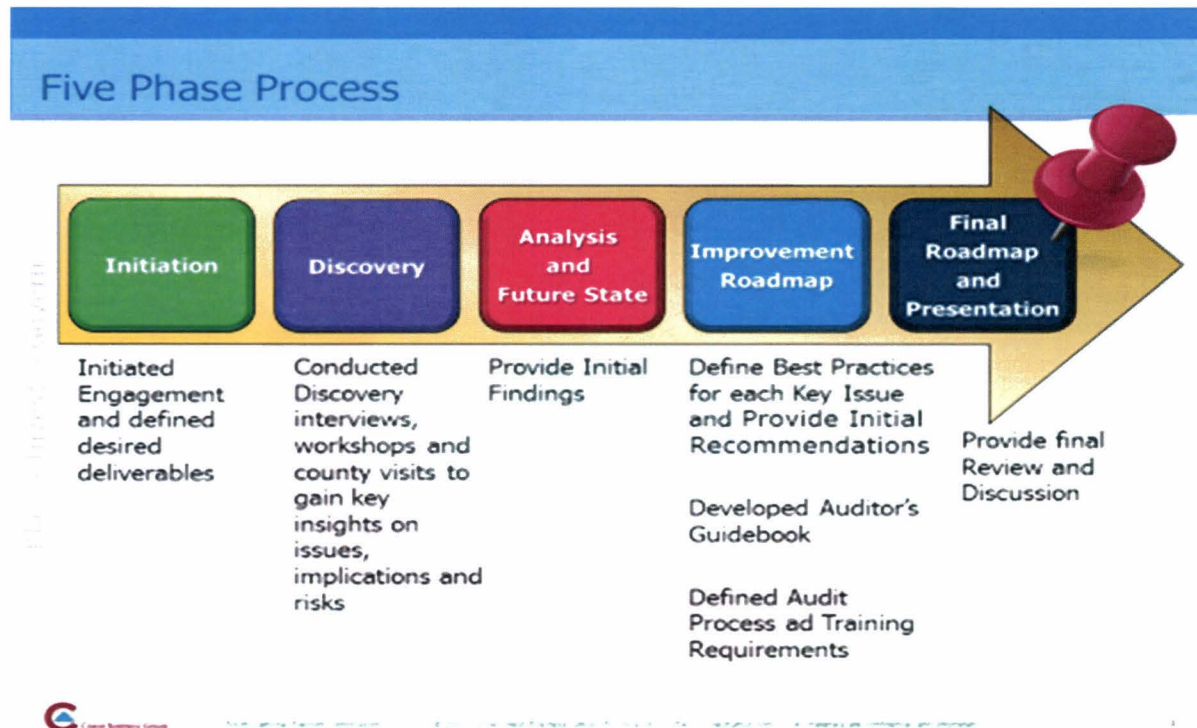
When elections are brought under scrutiny, it is not only the county offices that are in the spotlight. Those of us at the state level share the stage as well. It is time the separate entities worked together, instead of in opposition, to resolve any inconsistencies that might be causing one to pause. The election process, particularly the area of absentee voting, has always been a point of contention for the general public. The lack of trust in the system is only seeded by the lack of transparency in elections. Maintaining limpidity in the system while making sure not to compromise the integrity of a citizen's vote is a balancing act. This balancing act within the state of South Carolina is done with all lights on us, the election officials. The use of this audit process improvement will serve as the standard for developing future guidelines for other auditable areas. The more thoroughly we develop these guidelines to include

## Auditing Absentee Voting Processes in South Carolina

other areas, the more transparent our policies and procedures will be and the stronger our electoral process in South Carolina will become.

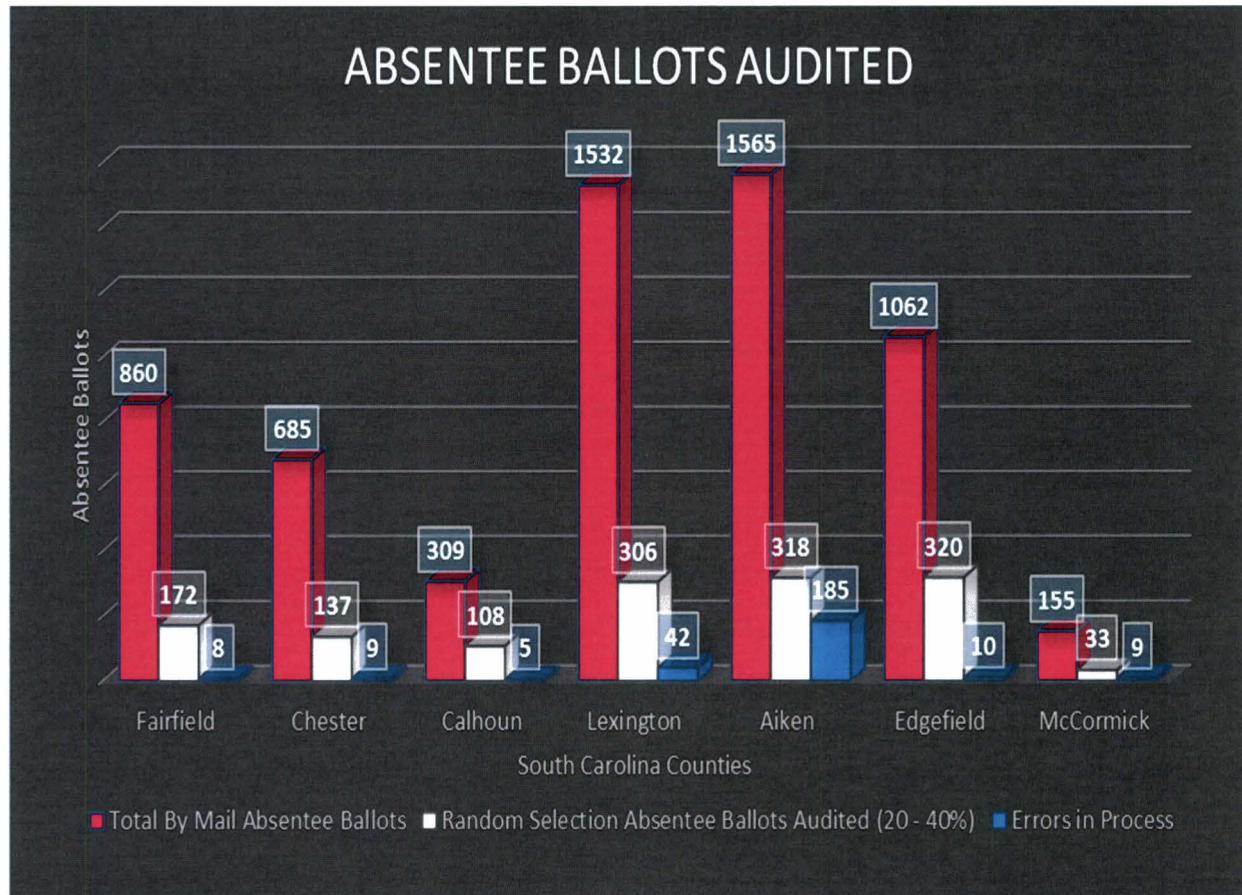
## 5. Appendices

### 5.1 Appendix A – Couer Business Group Audit Model



1.0 Voting Registration	2.0 Absentee Voting	3.0 Candidate Filing	4.0 Voting System	5.0 Polling Place Operations	6.0 Post Election Reconcile/Audits	7.0 Voting Administration
1.1 Pending Voters	2.1 Accuracy of Absentee Log	3.1 Accuracy-Timely Filing - Candidate Information	4.1 Logic & Accuracy Testing	5.1 On-time Opening Of Polls & Directors Checklist	6.1 Voting System Verification	7.1 Reimbursement Election Expenses
1.2 Precinct/District Changes	2.2 Timeliness Mailing Applications & Ballots	3.2 Documents Scanned Properly	4.2 Voting Unit Electronic Poll Book Allocation	5.2 Election Workers Training Program	6.2 Post-Election Audit of Materials	7.2 Training and Certification Program
1.3 County Location/Contact	2.3 Ballot Counting And Comparison	3.3 Filing/Checks Delivered to Political Parties	4.3 Readiness of Technology & IT Personal	5.3 Polling Place Evaluation Program	6.3 Dir. Checklist & Provisional Review	7.3 Meeting Attendance
1.4 ID Accuracy - System Access	2.4 Compliance with Policy/Procedures		4.4 Security of System	5.4 Polling Place Accessibility	6.4 Issuance of Provisional ballots	
1.5 Photo ID			4.5 Use of Asset Management	5.5 Identify Backup Locations CoQP Plan	6.5 Ballot Accounting	

## 5.2 Appendix B – Absentee Ballots Audited





## 5.3 Appendix C – State of South Carolina Application for Absentee Ballot

### State of South Carolina Application for Absentee Ballot

Precinct: _____	Application No. _____	
Mailing Address for Absentee Ballot: _____	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; font-size: 0.8em;">☐ Check here if your absentee ballot should be mailed to a different address. Enter the correct address on the back side of this application.</div>	<u>Election Districts:</u> U.S. Congress: _____ S.C. Senate: _____ S.C. House: _____ County Cncl: _____ School: _____ City Cncl: _____ Watershed: _____ Misc 1: _____ Misc 2: _____
Runoff Ballot Requested: _____	(Primary only)	
Party: _____	(Primary only)	Ballot Style: _____
Reason: _____		
Walk-in Applicant: _____		
Identification Provided: _____		

**Check the appropriate box to indicate why you are requesting an absentee ballot:**


- ☐ 01 A member of the Uniformed Services on Active Duty
- ☐ 02 A member of the Merchant Marine
- ☐ 03 A spouse or dependent of a member of the Uniformed Services or Merchant Marine
- ☐ 04 A U.S. Citizen temporarily residing outside of the United States due to employment, serving with the American Red Cross, USO, Peace Corps, etc.
- ☐ 05 A U.S. Citizen permanently residing outside of the United States
- ☐ 06 Physical Disability
- ☐ 07 Student, their spouse or dependents residing with them who are outside their county of residence
- ☐ 08 For reasons of employment will not be able to vote on Election Day
- ☐ 09 Government employee, their spouse or dependents residing with them, who are outside their county of residence on Election Day
- ☐ 10 Person on vacation who will be outside their county of residence on Election Day
- ☐ 11 Serving as a juror in a state or federal court on Election Day
- ☐ 12 Admitted to the hospital as emergency patient on the day of election or within a four-day period before the election
- ☐ 13 Death or funeral in the family within a three-day period before the election
- ☐ 14 Confined to a jail or pre-trial facility pending disposition of arrest or trial
- ☐ 15 Attending a sick or physically disabled person
- ☐ 16 Certified poll watcher, poll manager, county registration board or election commission member or staff working on Election Day
- ☐ 17 Persons sixty-five years of age or older

I do swear or affirm that I am a qualified elector, that I am entitled to vote in this election, and that I will not vote again during this election. The information above is true in all respects, and I hereby apply for an absentee ballot for the reason indicated above. Any person who fraudulently applies for an absentee ballot in violation of this section, upon conviction, must be punished in accordance with Section 7-25-20.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Only active military and overseas citizens may vote by email. All other ballots will be mailed via the United States Postal Service.*



## 5.4 Appendix D – Request for Absentee Ballot Application by Authorized Representative

<b>REQUEST FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION BY AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE</b>		<b>County</b>	
<b>Name of Election</b>		<b>Election Date</b>	
<b>Name of Authorized Representative</b>			
<b>County of Residence</b>		<b>Voter Registration Number</b>	
<b>Phone</b>		<b>Email</b>	

This request must be completed by an Authorized Representative (AR) requesting an absentee ballot application on behalf of a voter who has asked the AR to request an application on his behalf and who is unable to go to the polls for one of the reasons listed below. Any person may request an absentee application for an immediate family member without completing this form. Immediate family means a person's spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, and daughter-in-law.

To be an authorized representative, each box must be checked:

- ☐ I have been asked by a registered voter to request an application for absentee ballot on their behalf.
- ☐ I am not a candidate OR a member of a candidate's paid campaign staff OR a volunteer reimbursed for time expended on campaign activity.
- ☐ The voter is unable to go to the polls because of either:
  - An illness or disability and is confined in a hospital, sanatorium, nursing home or place of residence; or
  - A physical handicap is unable to go to his polling place due to existing architectural barriers which deny him physical access to the polling place, voting booth or voting apparatus or machinery.

I swear, or affirm, that I meet the above-stated legal definition of an "authorized representative." I am not a candidate, or a member of a candidate's paid campaign staff, or a volunteer reimbursed for time expended on campaign activity for any candidate for an office for which this election is being held.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Authorized Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

	Name of Voter	Date of Birth	Voter Registration Number
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

**Submit request to county voter registration office. Use additional forms for voters in other counties.**

SEC FRM 1055-201207

**SOUTH CAROLINA  
ELECTION COMMISSION**



## 5.5 Appendix E – Authorization to Return Absentee Ballot

### Authorization to Return Absentee Ballot

#### Instructions

To have your absentee ballot returned by a person other than yourself, you must complete and sign Section 1 of this form. The person you are authorizing to return your ballot(s) must meet the qualifications detailed below and complete and sign Section 2. The authorized returnee must return this form along with your ballot to the county voter registration office. Do not place this form in the envelope containing your ballot.

#### Authorized Returnee Qualifications

A candidate or a member of a candidate's paid campaign staff including volunteers reimbursed for time expended on campaign activity may not serve as an authorized returnee unless the person is a member of the voter's immediate family (spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, or daughter-in-law).

#### Section 1 (to be completed by absentee voter)

Name				
Address				
City		SC	Zip Code	
Telephone Number		Voter Registration Number		
I hereby authorize _____ to return my absentee ballot(s) (Name of returnee)				
to the _____ County Board of Voter Registration.				
Signature of Absentee Voter				

#### Section 2 (to be completed by person returning ballot)

Name					
Address					
City		State		Zip Code	
Telephone Number					
By signing below, I certify that I meet the qualifications to serve as an authorized returnee as detailed above.					
Signature of Authorized Returnee					

**DO NOT PLACE THIS FORM IN THE ENVELOPE CONTAINING YOUR BALLOT.**

# 5.6 Appendix F – Post Audit Survey

## Post Audit of Absentee Processes Survey

Please complete the survey below and return to the S.C. State Election Commission.  
Every survey matters. Every survey counts.



Was this audit handled in a professional and timely manner?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Was the auditor/area representative knowledgeable of the area being audited?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Was the auditor considerate of staff time?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Did the auditor inform you of the documentation necessary to complete the audit?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Was the process of how the audit would be conducted explained to you?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Have any future training events for your office been created or requested by the audit team as a direct result of the audit?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Were the findings, if any, thoroughly explained to your office and were corrections recommended?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Overall, was this audit a positive experience for your office?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

In the area below please provide any recommendations on how the SEC can improve upon the audit experience.

.....

.....



## **6. Works Cited**

- 1.) South Carolina General Assembly. *South Carolina Voter Registration and Election Laws 2014, Chapter 7*. Thomson Reuters, 2014.
- 2.) Act of the S.C. General Assembly, S.815 (Rat #220, Act #196 of 2014), By L. Martin and Campsen
- 3.) "Absentee Voting Myths vs. Realities". United States Army. Web. September 2014. <<https://www.army.mil/article/134530/>>.
- 4.) *Voter Registration and Election Commission Handbook*. South Carolina State Election Commission, May 2016. Print.